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ABSTRACT

In recent years, adult education has been experiencing a major growth spurt. In a 1982 survey, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that more than 21 million people over the age of 17 attended adult education activities during 1981, an increase of 3 million in 3 years. The NCES conception of adult education is a relatively narrow one, which results in conservative figures. Persons most likely to participate in adult education are middle-class, white, and high school or college graduates. Women are more likely than men to participate. Much of the adult education activity is job-related, and most participants are in their 20s and 30s. More than 37 million different courses were offered in 1981, but only about 3 percent of the courses were aimed at remedying adult illiteracy. Types of adult education are courses carried out by a variety of schools and recreation departments, continuing education courses offered by professional organizations, "second chance" programs for persons who were inadequately educated in childhood, and employer-sponsored education and training. Adult education activities will continue to expand in the years to come. To meet the challenges of adult education, adult educators will have to be trained to understand adulthood and meet the needs of adult students. (KC)

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David Harman

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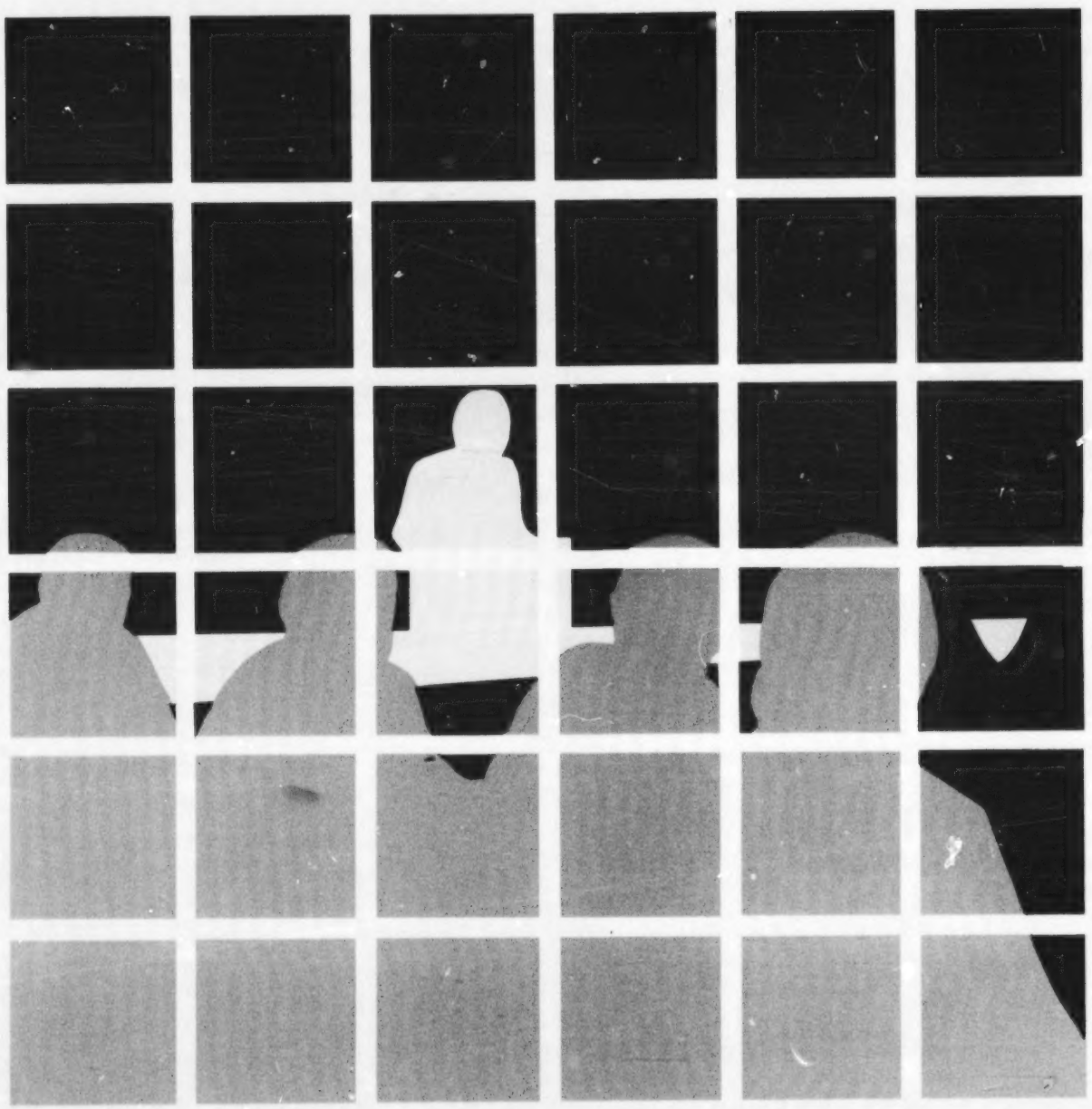

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Occasional Paper No. 105

ADULT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: ITS SCOPE, NATURE, AND FUTURE DIRECTION

by

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1985

FOREWORD

There is renewed interest in adult education currently. The shift from an industrial-based to an information-based, service-oriented society creates an increased interest in and demand for adult education for various reasons: (1) working adults now have more leisure time and (2) many workers need or want additional training or retraining to meet the new demands of the job market. Furthermore, the average age of the population in the United States is rising steadily. This is reflected by a 21 percent increase in 25- to 35-year-olds in postsecondary programs in the past 5 years and a 43 percent increase in enrollments of those over 35 as part-time students. Recent legislation concerning adult education and vocational education shows this heightened concern as well. However, a 1983 survey conducted by the National Center showed that recent graduates of vocational teacher education programs considered themselves unprepared for teaching adults enrolled for retraining.

David Harman is uniquely qualified to address the topic of adult education. As an undergraduate, he spent a year at Yeshiva University in New York and studied at the University of Besancon in France before receiving a B.A. in Middle East Studies from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. His masters and doctorate are both from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Dr. Harman is currently a Senior Lecturer in Education at Hebrew University, where he has been on the faculty since 1971. His teaching career also includes appointments at Radcliffe College, Harvard University, and he is currently a Visiting Professor at Columbia University Teacher's College. Dr. Harman has an impressive record of nonacademic positions, among them appointments in the Israel Ministry of Education and Culture as Pedagogical Secretary in the Department of Secondary Education, Deputy Director of the Department of Adult Education, and Chairman of the Task Force on Planning Education for the 1980s. He has served short-term assignments for the U.S. Office of Education's Adult Education division, and had worked as a consultant in Thailand, East Africa, Malaysia, Liberia, and Singapore. This year he is a Senior Scholar on the U.S. National Institute of Education (NIE) National Adult Literacy Project. Dr. Harman has held offices in many professional associations, and has a lengthy list of publications that includes books on community education, adult literacy, and nonformal education.

The Ohio State University and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education are pleased to present this seminar by Dr. David Harman.

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

Adult Education in the United States:
Its Scope, Nature, and Future Direction

In recent years adult education has been experiencing a major growth spurt. Responding to changing demographic patterns, new workplace requirements, and personal needs being expressed, as well as continuing dissatisfactions with the performance of formal school systems, adult education networks are being expanded through various means in country after country. Agencies and organizations, hitherto unrelated to any form of education, have been establishing programs alongside the more traditional delivery frameworks. It would not be incorrect to state that adult education has attained the status of a new, broad, and vibrant educational system; that on the map of contemporary education it occupies a position at least as significant as those of primary, secondary, and higher education.

Unlike other forms of education organized as systems, adult education has yet to describe itself in systematic terms and still lacks accepted definition. At present, it retains its traditional posture of incorporating a range of disparate programs sponsored by an equally diverse group of entities essentially sharing only one characteristic—the fact that all serve adult learners. Devoid of the cohesion that characterizes most educational systems, adult education generally remains in the throes of a seemingly perpetual quest for identity, both in terms of its intellectual underpinnings and its organizational personna. All too often, perceptions of marginality (Clark 1958) serve to constrain its development and the process of inquiry so necessary for its nourishment.

Virtually any activity sponsored within the confines of schools is, by tacit agreement, considered to be education, although there exists an equal degree of consensus that education is not their exclusive domain. Schools and schooling have been excoriated frequently regarding the value of much that takes place—or doesn't occur—under their aegis, but they remain nonetheless societally charged with being the principal agency for the education and training of the young in preparation for the assumption of adult roles and responsibilities. Although the terms *education* and *crisis* are often noted in tandem, the crisis usually describes perceptions of the manner in which schools have been carrying out their mandate and is not a reflection of altered attitudes regarding their basic mission. We still believe that schools are the primary institution for the education of the young and the preparation of youth for the assumption of adult roles in very much the way that Ruth Benedict described in her classical study, *Patterns of Culture* (1934). Each generation finds ways and means and mechanisms for preparing the next generation in order to assume its proper adult roles within society.

Adult education, by contrast, has been relatively more successful in avoiding criticism, largely due to a lack of clarity regarding both its functions and forms. In most cases ambiguity in respect of expectations translates into inadequate investment on the one hand and limited demand for accountability on the other. It is furthermore, the case that in adult education, it is not clear at whom criticism or dissatisfaction should be addressed, due to the fact that there simply is no coherent self-standing body clearly identified with the planning, organization, and operation of the universe of adult education activities. Adult education lacks the systemic coherence of schooling.

With these prefatory observations on the current context of adult education, I turn to an examination of its salient parameters and experience in the United States with a view toward proposing that its attributes combine to describe adult education as an important new force.

The Scope of the Enterprise

Triennially, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducts a survey of adult education participation around the country. Its most recently published figures (NCES 1982) report that over 21 million people above the age of 17 attended adult education activities during 1981, an increase of 3 million in the 3 years that had elapsed since the previous report (NCES 1979). Usually quoted as an indication of the state of the field, the NCES data are not uncontroversial. Disagreement stems from differing basic definitions and the ensuing difficulties in identifying and enumerating the full range of activities that comprise adult education practice.

The NCES data derive from a definition of adult education that focuses on those over 17 years of age who are not enrolled as full-time students in either secondary schools or colleges, but who participate in some form of "organized learning." That learning, in turn, is expected to have both institutionalized and formalized characteristics. Learning itself is apt to be distinguished from training, particularly in the context of skill acquisition in conjunction with job performance. The NCES conception of adult education is a relatively narrow one, which results in conservative figures.

At the other end of the definitional spectrum, Allen Tough (1971) has proposed the widely accepted notion that vast numbers of adults engage in self-planned and self-directed systematic learning projects outside of what might be considered normative adult education. He argues that they are adult learners in every way and perceptions of the field should be expanded to include them in its universe. Doing so would, of course, swell the NCES reported numbers and yield as many as between 75 and 95 percent of the entire adult population (Penland 1977). This is not merely an exaggeration intended to underscore the point that most people never cease learning, but rather an attempt to underline the unique attributes of adult education as an educational form. The essential proposition is that adult education caters in a variety of ways to adult students, mostly through nonformal means and only to some extent through formal ones. By emphasizing the more institutionalized elements of adult education practice, responsibilities toward the much larger group of self-directed participants are all too often ignored, if not totally abdicated.

Between these two approaches, the one minimalist and the other maximalist, are other estimates, each based on variations of definition (Fraser 1980). Whatever one's definitional preference, however, it should be clear that the adult education enterprise is vast and growing in absolute and proportional terms. From the point of view of definition, I tend to the view of adult education as embracing adult learners in formal and nonformal settings, whether pursuing their objectives as members of groups or as individuals. It is precisely the multi dimensionality of learning aims and multiplicity of instructional forms that distinguish adult education and establish its most significant characteristics. At the present time, available research findings do not make it possible to describe the full population of adult learners with sufficient detail as, for the most part, investigations have centered on programs and activities more likely to be included in the narrower definitional approach. Though incomplete, the data do reveal important trends which, while interesting in and of themselves, also suggest extrapolations and allow for speculation regarding the universe of participants.

It has long been known that the higher an individual's level of formal educational attainment, the more likely that person is to engage in formal adult education activity. Amply borne out by the NCES surveys (1979, 1982), one immediate consequence of this fact is that the profile of participants will closely resemble that of high school and college graduates, with an overrepresentation of white, middle-, and upper-class members and a parallel underrepresentation of minority and working-class people. Women also continuously retain a slight edge over men in program enrollments. Extracting a composite profile of the prototypical adult education participant, Patricia Cross has found that

> most were white high school graduates, between twenty-five and thirty-four years of age, employed more than thirty-five hours per week, with family incomes of $15,000 to $25,000 . . . Most participants were taking job-related courses to improve or advance their status in their current jobs. The courses they took were sponsored by two- or four-year colleges and taught in standard classroom format, meeting in school buildings and on college campuses. Learners paid for their courses from their own or family funds, and while most found that their courses met or exceeded their expectations, the single most common reason given for dropping a course was that it was disappointing or too demanding. (1982, p. 80)

Richard Swanson and Nancy Mosier have attempted to paint a similar composite profile on the basis of a subsample drawn from the 1981 NCES data and have found that

> the person most likely to participate in adult education is a full-time, employed female with two years of college education. She holds a white-collar job in a manufacturing industry. During 1980-81 she took two courses from a 4-year college or university. She did not take the courses for credit towards certification. (1983, p. 55)

Further detail can be extracted from the latest NCES data, indicating an improvement in the economic circumstances of participants, probably reflective of general pay increases, greater equity in women's work remuneration, and possibly also of an entry into adult education of a higher level trainee. If anything, then, the notion that there exists a correlation between one's formal level of education and one's propensity to participate in adult education is being strengthened rather than weakened. Specifically, 42 percent of enrollees had incomes over $25,000 as opposed to only 31 percent in that category in the population as a whole. Indeed, the trend emerging from the data is that the higher the family income, the more likely one is to participate in programs. Significantly, this trend is not uniformly true throughout the country. Clear regional biases appear in participatory patterns with the Northeast being underrepresented, the South being overrepresented. This phenomenon may well be a manifestation of the recent growth in the South of industrial activity with its consequent influx of new population. If this is the case, it would only serve to emphasize the job-related focus of much of adult education.

The two cited profiles, similar in their essential details, suggest that adult education is perceived by people as a continuation of their formal educational experiences, attracting them to programs conducted in familiar instructional styles in what are thought to be "acceptable" or "legitimate" frameworks, conforming to expected, conditioned patterns of what constitutes or does not constitute education. That attendance should be grasped as a vehicle for career advancement is not surprising as it is a continuation of the fundamental notion that education constitutes preparation for the assumption of adult roles. Hence continued educational activity is viewed by both employers and participants as being indicative of motivation for ongoing growth. The apparent lack of emphasis on formal certification might imply that beyond a certain point necessary for

initial job market entry—probably that of high school completion or Associate in Arts certification—mere attendance is of greater consequence than certification for promotion purposes. This is a point that cannot be overemphasized. Western societies, in general, have become inordinately credential conscious for purposes of job attainment, but not necessarily for purposes of job advancement. The value of a credential is at its greatest at the point of entry and from then on has diminishing value. Greater values are then assigned to job performance and other forms of training and education. Participants seem willing to pay for their education rather than have it paid for, presumably because it is believed to be a sound investment in the future and is not overly expensive. The average course cost reported in 1981 was $120.

Finally, it is interesting to note the young age of participants. A possible explanation of this characteristic might be that continuing educational experiences are more likely to appeal to those recently graduated from formal educational institutions, partially as a connecting tissue between different phases in the life span, and partially due to the fact that during the earlier periods of work careers, education holds forth the promise of growth and advancement. Both of these attributes diminish in later adulthood. Given the fact that demographic trends forecast a major growth in the population above 65 years of age, it is possible that in future years there will be a return to educational programs for an older population seeking to satisfy personal objectives and to occupy free time meaningfully. At present there are only faint indicators that this might develop into a trend. Although it is possible to speculate that adult education might develop a bimodal participatory shape, this has not as yet become clearly manifest. At present, the translation of discussion about increased educational opportunity for older adults into actual programs has not yet occurred.

Adult education's students attended no fewer than 37,381,000 different courses, 60 percent of which were in some way job related. Important to note, fully 74 percent of the latter were offered to those already working in order either to improve or advance in their positions. General education, the often-cited stereotype of adult education, constituted under 10 percent of the total, whereas education related to personal issues accounted for 27 percent. The overwhelming majority of courses (85 percent) were not directed at certification or licensing. Not surprisingly, employers have emerged as a major provider of adult education, directly providing 25 percent of all programs for the benefit of their own employees, and financing fully a third of all activities. In this respect there has been an important change over the past decade, with employers, long associated with the provision of education, entering the field with a vengeance.

One aspect of adult education's current range of activities warrants special mention. Over the past decades much rhetoric has been heard regarding those with inadequate levels of education. Many individuals are functionally illiterate and presumably unable to assume adult roles requiring the exercise of their full potential (Hunter and Harman 1979). Recently, President Reagan announced the launching of an adult literacy initiative, intended to induce the undertaking of aggressive action toward the elimination of illiteracy (Harman 1984).

Neither of the maps of adult education reflect this concern for adult illiteracy. Insofar as participation patterns are concerned, undereducated adults remain poorly represented. Among the course offerings, only a little under 3 percent of courses are aimed at that group. The functional literacy initiative announced in September by President Reagan has not been backed by federal dollars that might help to generate new activity. It is still felt that this is a passing problem easily solved by volunteers. The problem is accorded a great deal of attention in speeches and in newspapers but the effort to translate that notoriety into programs for adults has been minimal. In a very real sense, adult education, as it is presently structured in institutionalized frameworks, has all the attributes of an educational system catering to the more educated, more well-off members of the population. In a few words, it appears to be an educational system of the middle class and not of those who might benefit most from its existence.

The general picture painted with these figures extracted from the NCES data describes the more conservative, minimalist approach to adult education. Bryna Fraser (1980) has arrived at estimates of between 37,215,000 and 73,253,000 participants by utilizing broader definitions and several studies that have described some other aspects of adult education not included in the NCES survey (p. 11). The expanded database confirms rather than contradicts the central conclusions derived from the NCES material; to wit, available adult education opportunities cater predominantly to those up to the age of 40 who have attained higher levels of formal education, who are fully and gainfully employed, and who enjoy above-average levels of income. Moreover, the educational activities they choose to attend are more often than not related to their work life and, to a lesser extent, to a rainbow of personal concerns surrounding individual growth and family life. This does not mean that those not fitting this description are excluded from the enterprise. It does, however, strongly indicate that they are underrepresented and that many of their learning needs and interests are either not being addressed or are being satisfied by activities about which little is known. These activities might include local community clubs and groups that organize and operate informally (Brookfield 1984), sometimes labeled "community education." The community education movement is difficult to gather accurate information about, and is therefore, often wrongly ignored.

Viewing adult education from the vantage point of self-directed learners would alter the overall picture dramatically, as virtually all adults would then be included in its purview. A study undertaken by Patrick Penland (1977) identified 79 percent of the total adult population as engaged in self-directed learning projects, which, following Tough's (1971) original work on the subject, entailed systematic learning of 7 or more hours per project. Each of the projects included in the purview of this extensive activity had as its objective the gaining of some new skill or knowledge and relied upon some form of external input (e.g., friends, experts in a specific subject matter, newspapers, books, travel, television). The extent that this attitude toward adult education excites argument is a result of its attempt to eliminate the distinction between education and learning. Learning, many contend, is an activity that all or most people engage in throughout the life cycle, whereas education may more properly be seen as a more formal, institutionalized mechanism to facilitate its occurrence (Peterson 1982). Suggesting that education and learning are, in effect, synonymous enables the inclusion of self-directed learners in discussions on the adult education enterprise.

For practical purposes, it might be propitious to examine adult education in terms of a spectrum, at opposite ends of which are planned and nonplanned programs. The type of activity described by NCES and other similar data relate, in the main, to planned programs in which discrete curricula are offered to relatively known potential participants. In the self-directed learning model, by contrast, individuals determine objectives and then seek diverse resources to satisfy them. In a certain sense, planned programs consist of a combination of curricula and instructional modes, whereas unplanned activities transfer the onus of curriculum development to the learners themselves: planned versus "autodeveloped" education. Insofar as adult education is concerned, participation patterns could be identified along the same spectrum. The essential profile emanating from available formal data describes an area around the planned end of the spectrum, while it is entirely within the realm of possibility that a far more eclectic population, almost mirroring the shape of the adult universe, can be found aggregated around the nonplanned end. In this view adult education emerges as a more equitably distributed educational form.

The Nature of the Enterprise

Whatever one's position in terms of definition, it must be agreed that adult education is the most diverse of educational forms in both its substance and instructional approaches. A mere listing of the myriad subject matter addressed in programs would cover many pages and resemble the combined catalogs of conventional and nonconventional educational endeavors. In the main, programs tend to fall into several categories and are best understood in that context.

The earliest forms of adult education and the most enduring tend to fall into two distinct archetypes. People attended adult courses to further various personal interests by pursuing studies beyond their formal schooling together with others similarly motivated. Programs of this nature combined learning with social interaction, serving simultaneously as a form of recreation and self-fulfillment. Such activities included—and continue to encompass—a very broad range of contents from the stereotypical basket weaving, through history, philosophy, literature, and the like. Today, a great many adult education programs, often sponsored by local school boards and community organizations, annually organize such activities, publish catalogs listing offerings, engage faculties, and typically cover costs through participant tuition.

The second more traditional form of adult education has entailed the conduct of courses and programs by diverse professional groups for the benefit and continued education of their membership. Continuing education, in effect, has been one of the oldest of adult education activities, acting both to keep individuals current with developments in their fields of expertise and to generate a professional esprit de corps. Only recently labeled "continuing education," this type of activity has had a long history in the United States, as well as throughout Europe.

A relative newcomer to the practice of adult education, "second chance" opportunities are a product of the era of mass education. As notions of the inherent right of individuals to receive education became current during the course of the last century, leading to the passage of compulsory education laws and the establishment of mass systems of public education, it also happened that some individuals were excluded from their outreach. In some cases, people were never enrolled in schools, and in others, hoped for learning did not occur due to early attrition or ineffectual instruction. In yet other instances, school leavers sought ways of returning to pursue their schooling following periods of absence. Beginning during the turbulent World War II days when it became apparent that lack of education was an impediment to military service, "second chance" programs were created to enable people whose prior schooling had been inadequate or who had had none at all to attend courses leading to primary, secondary, and higher education equivalencies and certification. An earlier form of this type of education consisted of programs planned to impart basic skills, particularly reading, and was manifest in literacy campaigns and basic education programs. Another early form sought to assist new immigrants to the United States in their absorption by teaching English, aspects of American history and culture, and by acting as a vehicle of general acculturation. During the 1960s, this category of adult education became prominent in public policy and, indeed, constitutes the bulk of activity underwritten in the (1964) Adult Education Act.

A fourth type of adult education is tightly interwoven with workplace needs. Employers have long been aware of the fact that one's school experience does not necessarily provide the skills and knowledge required for job performance, so alternative mechanisms are needed in order to develop them. In the last century some employers began establishing their own schools to provide the training desired. By 1913 there was a sufficiently large body of factory schools to motivate the establishment of a National Association of Corporation Schools aggregating 34 firms. In subsequent years, an expanded society changed its name to the National Association of Corporation

Training, which still later was transformed into the American Management Association (Craig and Evers 1981). Alongside corporate education and training activities, other large employers such as the government and the military also have lengthy histories of providing their recruits and employees with job-specific programs.

In recent years there has been a virtual explosion in this type of adult education activity. Several factors have combined to provide it with added impetus and catapult it to prominence. First, in many occupations, advances in technology and managerial patterns have made it imperative to update employees continuously so that they can function well in their work. Even if initial, pre-labor market education and training are at the time adequate, developments rapidly outdate individual competency and require workers to seek further education. Second, formal school education is often less effective and relevant than one might wish. The phenomenon of functionally illiterate school graduates, for example, is a well-known and documented one (Hunter and Harman 1979). Specific subject matter, directly pertinent to workplace needs, is very often not included in school curricula. Consequently, employers are finding it propitious to provide their employees with entry-level and on-the-job training. Third, labor market mobility, both within and across places of employment, often necessitates further education and training in order to develop job-specific competencies.

At the present time it is estimated that the education and training activities of employers—industry, various levels of government, and the military—are so vast as to exceed, in dollar terms, the outlays of private and public institutions of higher education combined (Lusterman 1977; Craig and Evers 1981; U.S. Training Census and Trends Report 1984; Stewart 1980). Public and private higher education is currently expending approximately $90 billion per annum. Employer-provided education for employees, including the cost of time for which employees are paid while they attend education and training, is estimated currently at being upward of $100 billion. Labeled by Lusterman (1977) the "shadow system of education," this type of adult education effort is fast becoming its most significant component.

Employers are providing their employees with other types of educational opportunity that need be mentioned. A growing educational activity being undertaken is concerned with personal and family issues that are not necessarily related to employees' working experiences. For example, parent education programs are increasingly being sponsored (Harman and Brim 1980). In at least some cases, efforts of this nature are viewed as employee benefits and are undertaken in order to forge and strengthen employee ties to the firm. Additionally, many employers are making it possible for their members to undertake formal instruction at the tertiary level through programs of tuition remission. These efforts, at times channelled through unions and most often undertaken directly, are most usually related to job advancement. They do, however, also have the added feature of making it possible for individuals to obtain higher education credit and degrees, clearly a desirable incentive. Some corporations—to be sure very few at present—have gone a step further in that they have obtained accreditation for their own educational programs and are able to offer fully recognized academic degrees (e.g., Wang Institutes, Arthur D. Little). In a few cases, labor unions have also developed extensive educational opportunities for their membership ranging from basic literacy instruction through university degree programs. One such effort sponsored by the Teamsters Union in New York City offers members the ability to participate in a union-run evening school through which they can learn mastery of work-related skills, study for various certification examinations, gain high school equivalency diplomas (GEDs), prepare themselves for college entry, and obtain both bachelor's and master's degrees. In the not too distant future a youngster graduating from high school might be faced with two possible alternatives: the traditional path of entry into higher education and preparation for some rather uncertain employment

future, or immediate entry into the workplace where work and study may be combined while at the same time that individual would already be earning an income. Although clearly speculative, events in motion suggest that this may not be far-fetched.

Demographic changes serve as a motivating factor for the growth of yet another form of adult education. The aging of society, brought about by increased longevity on the one hand and declining birthrates on the other, has created a potential adult education audience of hitherto unprecedented proportions. Only in very recent times has adult education turned its attention to the needs and desires of this potential participant group, and an increasing number of programs are being developed, largely conforming in character to the more conventional adult education efforts long known and tried. In this arena, however, any significant developments lie in the future: current activity remains far more limited than public pronouncements might suggest.

Adopting the Tough approach to self-directed learning, it becomes necessary to include two further sources among those responsible for the spread and conduct of adult education. These include publishers who make available the books, magazines, journals, and newspapers often relied upon by individuals planning their educational experiences, as well as television and radio program producers. Although not typically thought of as adult education agencies, both publishers and media producers in fact play key roles in making various learning opportunities widely available.

The nature of the adult education enterprise has grown dramatically over the past few decades. It is broad in terms of the variety of programs being offered, the sponsorship of such activities, and also the methodology or implied methodology of instruction employed. Virtually all known instructional approaches can be found, ranging from very traditional and conventional methods to advanced technologies based on computer interaction and self-paced teaching using different learning machines or machines adapted for educational purposes. The growth of practice has exceeded the ability of the adult education field to service its needs adequately, such that much of the actual instruction is not based upon even those principles of adult learning that are known. A cursory examination of some of the curricula currently being used reveals that many borrow their notions of teaching and learning from those initially developed for use among school-age children or employ trendy technologies without proper regard to their appropriateness. Unfortunately, the state of evaluative research in adult education is such that one cannot, with any degree of certitude, comment upon the efficacy of much of the enterprise.

The Enterprise Unbound: Implications and Trends

During the course of the past century, perhaps most cogently in the years since World War II, adult education has mushroomed into a diverse and vast area of activity. Insofar as education in general is concerned, two aspects of this development are particularly noteworthy. First, most of the growth of adult education programs has occurred outside the normative educational system. Those predominantly interested in their sponsorship are those hoping to benefit directly from their products, such as employers. Adult education in such a context becomes a secondary activity of some larger undertaking, rather than its primary focus. This differs from the more familiar school model in which providing education is the central concern. Second, all adult education has developed outside the purview of compulsory education, which, in turn, has attracted the bulk of professional attention. Consequently, adult education has almost always occupied a marginal position in schools of education and in the generation of research, development, and training efforts. Adult education is in less of a position to contribute to the growth of practice than it might have been had greater emphasis been placed on its own evolution.

Prefacing an issue of *Daedalus* devoted to adulthood, Stephen Graubard (1976) noted that:

> **The archives for the study of adulthood still wait to be created. . . . The materials for such study are abundant and varied. Whether the data are psychoanalytic, medical, literary, or religious, whether they are contained in moral and religious precepts, expressing normative values not necessarily realized, or in a historic record, revealing practices common to a specific people at a particular time, whether in a film, a diary, or a great literary work that waits to be interpreted, the problem is to develop analytic procedures that will make the study of "adulthood" as common as the study of "childhood." Indeed, the greatest need may be to relate the two. (p. v)**

In this statement Graubard has pinpointed one of adult education's main lacunae; our understanding of processes of adult development and learning are unfortunately too embryonic, speculative, and tentative to allow for the drawing of practical conclusions with respect to the design of instruction and curricula. Evaluative research is such that only partial findings are available indicating which approaches may be more beneficial than others. There is, to be sure, a sizeable literature that is systematically being added to (see, for example, Knox [1977] for a survey), but it is as yet far from meeting the requirements of the field. The basis for such investigation should consist of firm anchorage in understanding adulthood as a distinct phase in life, and this remains lacking as Graubard correctly points out. For much too long we have been the attention of the behavioral and social sciences as well as of education has focused on children and adolescents and their needs and not on adults, the nature of adulthood, and the learning patterns that are peculiar to adults.

The marginality of adult education has mitigated against the field's attracting a sufficiently broad and qualified cadre of professionals seeking to pursue careers in research, instruction, training, and program development. There are too few centers of such activity and those that do exist are engaged in a constant struggle for mere survival. Clearly, this situation does not bode well for a significant growth in the field itself.

Many of the outlined programs have been forced to turn to different quarters for professional input and guidance. Corporate education activities, for instance, are either being developed by corporate staffs assembled for that purpose, or serviced by a growing industry of varied and often dubious firms offering expertise of questionable origin. In a word, the field of adult education has thus far proven to be unequal to the task of adequately providing adult education programs with the necessary intellectual and substantive inputs. Since evaluations are virtually nonexistent, one cannot make the argument that practice has suffered as a result, albeit logic would dictate that it cannot greatly flourish.

Adult education activities will continue to expand in both quantity and diversity if the trends of the past few years continue. Indeed, it may be argued that we are witnessing the beginnings of a reshaping of education in general in the direction of an interspersion of secondary and higher education with work, along the lines envisioned by those proposing models of lifelong, recurrent, continuing, or permanent education. Individuals may structure their working and learning lives so that the two intertwine rather than follow each other in sequence as has been the norm thus far. Initial signs abound that such a transition is in the making.

The ramifications of such a major shift in the nature of education are legion. Not only will adult education be affected, but so will institutions of secondary and tertiary education. The latter will be forced into the creation of relationships and the development of ongoing dialogue with representatives of the employment sector such that the two systems will mesh with each other rather than enter into competition. Dialogue of this nature has already begun occurring and should

be expanded vastly and rapidly (Lynton n.d.). Schools will have to reexamine their roles in relation to preparing participants for post-schooling careers, and employers should be directing attention to the retooling of schools so that the latter equip their charges in more direct and relevant ways. This does not have to occur at the expense of liberal education, as the heavy emphasis on the connection between work and education might imply. On the contrary, such reassessment might serve to revitalize liberal education by imbuing it with a new sense of purpose.

At the present time, the field of adult education per se, and educational programs that cater to adults could seek the forging of a new alliance. Each stands to benefit by having greater access to the other. Adult education could contribute to practice and in the process carve out its rightful niche in education as well as take advantage of the unparalleled laboratory afforded it by the expanded activity. Programs could be enhanced in their design and methodology by internalizing that which adult education, even at this still initial phase of its development, has to offer. Most important, both arenas will be the beneficiaries of aggressive investigation, study, and the improved understanding of adulthood and adult learning and development that results.

Henry Steele Commager (1951) remarked; "No other people ever demanded so much of schools and education as have the American [people]. None other was ever so well served by its school and educators" (p. 546). If this has been true of the school movement in the United States to date, it has only been so because of the intensive and systematic effort to provide practice with the knowledge and understanding of human growth essential for its constant improvement. There has been a tacit agreement that practice and study are two sides of the same coin. In respect to adult education, it would appear to be self-evident that this duality needs to be pursued.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

David Harman

Question: Adult education in the United States has been directed at the middle class. Are the new trends for lifelong entitlements changing this?

Throughout its history, adult education has predominantly been a middle class enterprise. Participation has been largely drawn from the more educated members of middle classes, and programs have tended to address themselves to them. There have, of course, been some important exceptions such as the use of adult education classes in this country to assist immigrants in their absorption, literacy and basic education programs, job training activities, and others. In recent years there has been a growing tendency to view adult education in more egalitarian ways as being a continuing or lifelong undertaking. Unfortunately, rhetoric has generally outstripped practice in this regard. It is unclear if and how lifelong entitlements will be enacted. However, under some of the schemes currently afoot greater emphasis is being placed on making adult education opportunities available to a wide range of individuals from all classes of society.

Question: You mentioned a $120 cost per course. What kinds of courses does that include?

In as diverse an enterprise as adult education, cost data are always apt to be inaccurate. The $120-per-participant figure was calculated by the NCES on the basis of 1981 data and refers to courses in 2- or 4-year colleges, community centers, ABE, and GED, as well as some of the more formal job related training programs. It is interesting to note that program costs are often borne by entities such as employers rather than by participants themselves.

Question: Do you see a conflict between secondary and postsecondary institutions for adult career education?

No. Secondary education institutions cater to a very specific population, whereas postsecondary institutions view their clienteles in broader terms. Over the next few years shrinking numbers of people in the traditional age cohorts of enrollees in both will have an effect in the way in which they conduct themselves. Secondary institutions are likley to increase the competition between themselves, offering prospective students greater opportunities relative to work life preparation. Postsecondary institutions, community colleges, 2- and 4-year colleges and universities, will most likely continue to address themselves to nontraditional groups of prospective students, including employment related programs, activities for the elderly, and others in their programs. I do not envision competition between secondary and postsecondary institutions for adult learners.

Question: Is there money for "second chance programs" such as for the disadvantaged or the incarcerated?

Monies for many second chance programs appear to be drying up. Government allocations for ABE and GED activities have been less than the maximum allowable under current legislation for some years. In other programs aimed at disadvantaged groups funds have either been decreased or held at past year levels—a de facto decrease. Public funds for programs for the incarcerated have not grown in any meaningful way. It is unlikely that public spending on adult education activities of this nature will be replaced by alternative sources. Furthermore, new initiatives have not occurred recently.

Question: There has been speculation that electronic technologies will make traditional delivery systems such as universities obsolete yet attempts have failed. How can this paradox be explained?

The full implications for instruction of new technologies have yet to be fully understood and assimilated by educators. Indeed, it is often the case that such technologies are adopted for use, only to be manipulated in the most conventional of fashions. I suspect that there is also an element of "unionism" involved: talk of machines replacing people in instructional processes must be viewed as a threat by some in a labor intensive profession such as education. One should bear in memory that education has proven to be very slow in absorbing any kind of innovation, and the new instructional technologies or technologies with instructional potential are no exception.

Question: You questioned the credentials of those working in adult education. What sort of credentials should adult educators have?

The profession of instructor of adults is underdeveloped in several respects. We are still lacking in a full and proper definition of what teachers of adults need to know and how they ought to be prepared. The issue, then, is less a technical one of credentialing, and more a fundamental issue of determining what is required. In my view, the preparation of teachers of adults should include the study of adulthood, anchored in the social and behavioral disciplines that have studied that period of life. In addition, prospective teachers should have had training in curriculum and instructional methods, as well as a period of supervised practice. These components, I would suggest, should form the basis of training programs and be required for credentialing purposes. At present there is chaos in regard to both teacher training and certification. Virtually anyone who so desires can become a teacher of adults, very often to the detriment of students. As a field of educational research and practice, adult education should also develop its own curriculum and agenda far beyond the point at which much of it is currently found. In particular, I believe that the study of adulthood and learning during phases of adult development are critical aspects of the field that have been neglected for too long.

Question: How would you suggest that we define adult education?

Adult education is that area of educational practice and investigation that addresses the demands and requirements of adult students. Practice should be grounded in the understanding of adulthood as a distinct phase of life, itself characterized by growth and change. The substance of adult education can and should be variable, relating to a diversity of needs and interests as well as to the range of contexts in which adults are members and in which they live. These observations do not form a formal definition; they do, however, suggest its contents.

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